HALTON REGION's HERITAGE ABANDONMENT DISCEPTION - FAQs

Does Bill 23 *More Homes Built Faster Act* affect museum, archival or art collections? No. Bill 23 only relates to designation of heritage buildings and to heritage districts.

Why was the promised $8 million for a new centre for Halton Heritage Services removed from the budget in 2024? Whose idea was it to remove this budget item? Halton Region Councilors and staff continue to evade answering these questions.

What collections does Halton Heritage Services care for? About 18,500 museum objects, 3000 photographs and 13,000 archival records related to Halton County as a whole up to 1974 including historic towns/villages in the county/region, and Halton Region as a whole since 1974.

Was there a council meeting or public notice I missed about this issue? There was no notice or public meeting about the decision to close Halton Heritage Services and transfer, sell or destroy the heritage collection.

Doesn't Halton Region's Public Engagement Model require public notice and consultation for such a large budget change, dispersal of museum and archival collection, and cancellation of heritage services and programming that affect residents? Yes. The lowest level in this communication model is "Inform," which at the very least provides information to the public. The other engagement options enable consulting and collaborating with citizens and professional stakeholders.

Who owns museum and archival collections in Ontario? They are held in trust for *you*, the public, by institutions required to professionally care for them and provide access to *you*, the public.

What are the steps to deaccession an object or collection?
Professional guidelines require full documentation of each object as this is the last time a collection of objects or documents will be seen as a whole.
1. Locating the object; ensuring it is fully catalogued and photographed; updating the database with this information; checking donor record to see if a deaccession clause is part of the agreement and if not, making artifact lists for deaccession public or contacting the donors, or their families, if donor is deceased; researching the artifact to see what other museum is relevant to its history; contacting other museums to see if it fits their mandates/have room for new artifacts; ensuring that the artifact or document is stabilized to move and ensuring there is no mold, water

damage, or pests that would endanger the artifacts held by the museum receiving them; packing; and transport to new museum.

How long does it take to deaccession and transfer an object? An extremely conservative estimate, assuming no problems in the above process, is 4 hours per object. That means Halton's 18,500 museum artifacts requires 74,000 hours conservatively or 37 years to deaccession. This doesn't include the 3000 photographs or 13,000 archival records held by Halton Heritage Services.

What if 1 object -- such as a medical kit -- includes 50 pieces? Doesn't that mean the process is faster? Possibly. The donor agreement and legal paperwork would be faster. But each of those 50 pieces still needs to be catalogued, photographed, conserved, packed separately, and transported according to professional guidelines.
Are there items that don't belong in a museum or archives? Possibly. But each item still must be examined and researched before that decision can be made, and the donors still must be notified because they signed a legal donor agreement and may have received a tax receipt for that donation.

What is the cost for taxpayers for this deaccession and transfer of collections? Staff time adds up. 74,000 hours at current Ontario minimum wage equals about $1.3 million. This doesn't include the 3000 photographs or 13,000 archival records held by Halton Heritage Services.

Are there other costs? Yes. Database software has yearly subscription fees. Photography equipment, conservation supplies, packing supplies, heating and electricity bills, and increases to minimum wage or higher salaries above minimum wage are some of the extra costs. Archival and photographic collections require professional appraisal before deaccessioning.

Halton Region Council says most objects will be transferred to local museums but aren't local museums already overcrowded? Yes, most Ontario museums are already overcrowded, and their storage spaces face issues such as water leaks, damaging temperatures or humidity levels, improper or no fire suppression systems, and inadequate security. Recent studies have shown that a key element museums consider for new donations is the inability to store them safely. The suggestion that most objects will find a new home is highly unrealistic. A 2019 survey found less than 10% of proposed collection transfers find a new home.

Are there costs for the museums that take deaccessioned items? Yes. Staff time is needed to unpack, inventory, condition report, transfer all database information to the new catalogue, and rearrange storage to house

new items. More shelving and storage supplies may be needed depending on the capacity of the local museum accepting the artifacts.

Will Halton Region Council provide funding for these new costs for local museums? No.

What if an object, document, or photo is relevant to Halton County or Region overall, not a specific town or village? Halton Region Council and staff have evaded answering this question.

Not all areas of Halton Region, such as Milton, have museums. Will other museums accept objects related to these areas? Local museum mandates are restricted to their own areas because of overcrowding. Halton Region Council has evaded answering this huge gap in their transfer plan.

What if an artifact is not relevant to any local museum collecting mandate? Halton Region plans to sell such artifacts at public auction.

What else is eliminated by the closure of Halton Heritage Services?

- The *Monthly Heritage Dispatch* (282 subscribers)
- Work with high school teachers and students to create exhibits in schools (5 schools in 2024 with 1200 students) and with non-profits to commemorate their histories (5 exhibits in 2024)
- Memory care programs (10 in 2024 for about 250 seniors)
- Research workshops and public talks (2 in 2024)
- Programming such as Burlington Heritage Week, Children's Water Festival, Milton, and the Crossing Community Heritage Day (about 500 attendees), recently nominated for a Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Community Programming.

What can I do to help?

- Call or email:
    - Gary Carr, Vice Chair, Halton Region, gary.carr@halton.ca, 905-825-6115
- Your mayor:
    - Marianne Meed Ward (Burlington), mayor@burlington.ca, 905-335-7607
    - Ann Lawlor (Halton Hills), mayor@haltonhills.ca
    - Gordon Krantz (Milton), executiveservices@milton.ca, 905-878-7252 x 2104
    - Rob Burton (Oakville), mayor@oakville.ca, 905-338-4172
- Your MPP:
    - The Honourable Stephen Crawford, MPP, Oakville, stephen.crawford@pc.ola.org, 905-827-5141
    - The Honourable Zee Hamid, MPP, Milton, zee.hamid@pc.ola.org, 905-878-1729

    - Natalie Pierre, MPP, Burlington, natalie.pierre@pc.ola.org, 905-639-7924
    - Joseph Racinsky, MPP, Wellington—Halton Hills, joseph.racinsky@pc.ola.org, 519-787-5247
    - Effie J. Triantafilopoulos, MPP, Oakville North—Burlington, effie.triantafilopoulos@pc.ola.org, 905-825-2455
- Sign the petition here: https://www.change.org/p/reverse-the-decision-to-close-halton-region-s-heritage-operations